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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Joint Inspection Unit

Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the consideration of the General Assembly, his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2009/8).

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Summary

The Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations" evaluates the legal and institutional framework and practices with respect to the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other executive heads in the United Nations system organizations. The recommendations contained in the report are aimed at the harmonization of selection criteria and conditions of service at the level of executive heads of United Nations system organizations.

The present report sets forth the views of United Nations system organizations on the recommendations provided in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. The views of the system have been compiled on the basis of inputs provided by organizations members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination which welcomed the report and noted that it brought together information on existing practices in United Nations organizations with respect to this important topic. Agencies noted that most of the recommendations were directed at legislative/governing bodies.

I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2009/8) evaluates the legal and institutional framework and practices with respect to the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other executive heads in the United Nations system organizations. The recommendations contained in the report are aimed at the establishment of harmonized selection criteria and conditions of service at the level of executive heads of United Nations system organizations.

II. General comments

2. Agencies welcomed the report, which they found interesting, and noted that it brought together information on existing practices in United Nations organizations on this important topic. They observed that, as the selection and conditions of service of executive heads were generally the province of legislative and governing bodies, the recommendations and analyses represented the view of Member States for the most part, although the report itself recognized that there was no uniform view among them.

3. Agencies also noted that most of the recommendations contained in the report were directed at the organizations' legislative and governing bodies for their consideration and action. Therefore, in formulating their responses to the report, agencies limited their comments to general topics and agreed that, should their legislative/governing bodies take up the matters addressed in the report, they would provide all the necessary support for those deliberations and implement all decisions to the extent required by staff members. As agencies did not comment on all of the recommendations, the following section provides the views of the Secretary-General and the organizations members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on some of the recommendations.

III. Specific comment on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The legislative bodies of the United Nations, specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency which have not yet done so should conduct hearings/meetings with candidates running for the post of executive head, in order to enhance the transparency and credibility of the selection process and to make the process more inclusive of all Member States.

4. Agencies generally accepted the need for candidates for executive head positions to interact with legislative bodies, as called for in this recommendation, and many noted that they were already following that practice. Some agencies noted that they were in the process of implementing practices that provided for interaction between candidates and the legislative bodies; however, they suggested that those procedures were unlikely to have a significant impact on a process which was primarily political in nature.

Recommendation 7

The legislative/governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should condemn and prohibit unethical practices such as promises, favours, invitations, gifts, et cetera, provided by candidates for the post of executive head or by their supporting Governments during the selection/election campaign in return for favourable votes for certain candidates.

5. Agencies expressed support for the principles expressed in this recommendation, subject to specific modalities of its implementation.

Recommendation 9

The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should adopt provisions comprehensively addressing conflicts of interest pertaining to, and/or wrongdoing/misconduct allegedly committed by, executive heads, if such provisions have not yet been adopted.

6. Agencies agreed in principle with this recommendation, subject to the specific modalities of implementation.

Recommendation 10

The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should direct the internal oversight or ethics office/function, as appropriate, or JIU to conduct investigations into alleged cases of wrongdoing or misconduct, including retaliation and irregularities relating to financial disclosure statements, allegedly committed by executive heads of system organizations. The investigating authority should report the outcome of the investigation directly to the legislative body of the respective organization for action on the matter. JIU, however, can undertake on its own initiative such investigations, should it so decide.

7. Agencies commenting on this recommendation noted that there would be an inherent conflict of interest if the investigation were carried out by an internal body, and suggest that an external authority would be more appropriate for such investigations.